

listened to his instructions and mercy of God, asked for admission into his Order. Others again, though remaining in the world, endeavored to approach in virtue the example of their teachers. They desired to be in closer communion with the monks, so as to share in their prayers and good works. This favor was accorded them through the confraternity or brotherhood with the Order of St. Benedict.

It was effected by an act by which the postulant bound himself to God and to the Order, with the promise to labor at a renovation of his life according to the spirit of the Holy Rule. Those who offered or consecrated themselves in this manner were called oblates (from the Latin word *oblatus*). St. Gregory mentions a number of instances of parents thus offering their children. Already at Subiaco pious persons of rank came from Rome bringing their sons to Benedict, that he might rear them in the service of God. The Senator Equitius brought his promising twelve-year-old son Maurus, and the Patrician Tertullus offered the boy Placidus.

In the 59th chapter of his Rule St. Benedict describes the manner in which this oblation of children is to be made, together with the conditions to be observed by their parents. But from a number of passages in St. Gregory it is equally clear that also adults were admitted as oblates. We may cite an instance. The monk Valentian had a brother living in the world who was, nevertheless, in some manner a religious. Every year he came, fasting, to the monastery, to see his brother and to receive the blessing and words of counsel from Benedict. One day, as he was again on his way to the monastery, he was joined by a wayfarer supplied with provisions for the journey. After long hours of travel the latter said: "Come, brother, let us eat, lest we become exhausted on the way;" to which the other replied: "No, no, I will not eat, for I am accustomed to come fasting to the venerable father Benedict." About an hour later the invitation was repeated, but he refused as before. Continuing on their journey they